

Sir Gawain & the Green Knight

By the Pearl poet

PART ONE – pages 3-35

11-15 Describe this new visitor (later to be called the Knight of the Green Chapel or just the Green Knight). Other than his color, what is distinctive about him?

19 How does King Arthur respond to the new arrival?

21 Describe specifically the challenge and its rules. Why wait a year for the second blow?

23-25 Arthur responds; Gawain insists on taking his place. Why?

Knights were powerful, virtually a law unto themselves. In order to restrain them, there developed a code of behavior symbolized by the behavior of the knights of King Arthur's court. Define chivalry based on Gawain's actions in response to the "mortal challenge."

PART TWO – pages 37-77

45-47 The pentangle was clearly a major symbol. Overall it stood for "TRUTH." What are the specific virtues associated with it? And does Gawain so far live up to its virtues?



49-53 Just before Gawain stumbles upon the castle, what most worries him about being stuck in the forest? How does religion (esp the specific holiday references here) influence the story and his characterization?

63-65 When Gawain gets to the castle, he's evidently famous. For what? How does this compare to Beowulf's arrival in Hrothgar's court?

65-67 Two women hold special prominence in this court; both will be of importance to the story. Describe them both, young and old.

75-77 The two men make a significant promise to each other – what are the conditions of this promise? How is it similar to the challenge of the Green Knight?

PART THREE – page 79-135

79-81 Pay attention to the language of the first hunt for deer. Connect to what's happening back home.

83-91 Here is Gawain's "erotic temptation." What's happening? How does his response characterize him?

95-97 How is the men's agreement met? What extra info did the lord hope for? How did Gawain dodge it?

101 Pay attention to the language of the second hunt for boar. Connect to what's happening back home.

105 How does Gawain again escape the "instruction in love" the lady requests?

115 The lord says, "I have tested you twice and found you of good faith. / Now tomorrow remember, 'the third throw pays for all.'" Pay attention to the language of the third hunt for FOX. (Why a fox?)

119-123 The lady is at it again! How does Gawain hold up?

125 She wants him to have something...anything wrong with that? Anything about the belt raise any red flags? What mortal dilemma does he face? What does his decision show about his deepest fear?

PART FOUR – page 137-171

145 What temptation does the porter offer? He goes on, but he's wearing the green sash. Does that make him a coward anyway? Less knightly?

155 Is the flinch cowardly? Explain.

155-159 How does Gawain measure up to chivalric standards? Has this been a fair test? Is he perfect? Any idea why he isn't able to resist all temptation (and not take the sash)?

161 How does Gawain respond when the truth is out? What do we learn based on this response?

165-167 What does the reader learn about the identity of some of the players here? Why is the challenge from the Green Knight issued? What is the result?

169-171 Gawain returns to Arthur. He could hide what had happened...but what does he do instead? What do we learn about him and the cultural standards of 'hero' based on his response to his 'test'?